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Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 09260 180051Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 INSE-00 VO-05 CA-01
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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1632
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, HK
SUBJECT: INDOCHINA REFUGEES PROGRAM IN HONG KONG

1. SUMMARY: DURING A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE INDOCHINA REFUGEE SITUATION IN HONG KONG, LOCAL OFFICIALS AGREED TO THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. INDOCHINA REFUGEES TRANSFERRED FROM HONG KONG TO THE PROPOSED HOLDING CENTER IN MACAU WOULD BE GUARANTEED RE-ADMISSION.

B. REFUGEES ADMITTED TO HONG KONG WOULD BE PERMITTED TO WORK (HOPEFULLY RESULTING IN A LOWERING OF UNHCR COSTS).

C. THE STATUS OF REFUGEES REFUSING SETTLEMENT OFFERS IN THIRD COUNTRIES WOULD BE REVIEWED AND THEIR ADMISSION TO HONG KONG UNDER UNHCR POSSIBLY TERMINATED.

2. DIRECTOR ORM LOWMAN ACCOMPANIED BY CONGENOFFS MET ON JULY 14 WITH ACTING DIRECTOR HONG KONG IMMIGRATION, ALAN CARTER; ASST. POLITICAL ADVISER, IAN ORR; ATN OTHER
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HONG KONG OFFICIALS IN GENERAL REVIEW OF REFUGEE SITUATION. ACTING DIRECTOR CARTER EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER THE RAPID GROWTH OF REFUGEES IN HONG KONG IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS, NOTING THAT THERE WAS A CURRENT POPULATION OF ABOUT 1,600 WHICH AT THE PRESENT REATE MIGHT REACH 3,000 BEFORE THE TYPHOONS STARTED IN THE FALL. HE ADDED THAT THE "ONLY RAY OF LIGHT" ON THE SCENE WAS THE

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POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT IN MACAU OF A HOLDING CENTER FOR THE HONG KONG SPILLOVER. CARTER HOPED THAT UNHCR WOULD QUICKLY CONCLUDE ITS AGREEMENT WITH THE MACAU GOVERNMENT AND MAKE AVAILABLE THE OFFERED FACILITIES FOR 600 REFUGEES. HE ASSURED HONG KONG'S GUARANTEE THAT ANY REFUGEES ADMITTED TO MACAU WOULD BE ACCEPTED FOR READMISSION INTO HONG KONG IF NOT RESETTLED.

3. RESPONDING TO LOWMAN'S APPEAL FOR LOWERING UNHCR REFUGEE COSTS IN HONG KONG, CARTER PROMISED TO ASSIST UNHCR IN LOCATING POSSIBLE SIGHTS FOR REFUGEE HOUSING AND AGREED TO AMENDING THE TERMS OF REFUGEE ADMISSION TO HONG KONG SO THAT REFUGEES MAY LEGALLY WORK AND BE LESS DEPENDENT UPON UNHCR.

4. WITH REGARD TO SMALL NUMBER OF CASES WHICH HAD REFUSED RESETTLEMENT IN THIRD COUNTRIES IN THE HOPES OF HOLDING OUT FOR THE US, CARTER SAID THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS THE CASES WITH THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE IN HONG KONG AND IF NECESSARY GRANT THESE REFUGEES RESIDENCE STATUS IN HONG KONG THEREBY REMOVING THEM FROM UNHCR ROLES.
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